

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 1, 2021

The Honorable Yuriko Koike
Governor of Tokyo
8-1 Nishi-Shinjuku 2-chome
Shinjuku-Ku, Tokyo 163-8001
Japan

Dear Governor Koike:

We write to add our voices to the many other world leaders who are asking that Tokyo's Metropolitan Government's ban the illegal trade and export of ivory ahead of the Olympic Games. As members of Congress from the state of Oregon, which passed a ballot measure in 2016 to prohibit the trade in elephant ivory and other threatened species products, we understand the need for individual jurisdictions worldwide to take collective action to protect biodiversity and respectfully request that you take similar action.

Elephants are among the world's most iconic and beloved species, and they face a multitude of threats including that of being poached to supply the trade in their ivory. There is global recognition of the conservation crisis facing elephants, and many countries, including the United States, and jurisdictions have taken steps to protect elephants and curb the demand for ivory both at home and transnationally.

While other nations and jurisdictions are closing their markets for ivory, Japan's domestic market remains open and is the largest legal market in the world. Ivory buyers in Japan are able to purchase ivory easily and continue to do so because it's available and sold widely by thousands of retailers. Recent surveys show that many retailers are willing to sell ivory even knowing that a customer plans to illegally transport the items out of the country. We continue to receive reports of seizures of illegal ivory exports from Japan by other nations' enforcement agencies.

While international travel has declined due to COVID-19, thousands of people from across the globe will likely travel to Tokyo for the Olympic and Paralympic Games this year. With news of vaccine development and distribution, we hope that even more tourists will be able to experience Tokyo soon. As more global travellers return to your city, there is a high risk that visitors, either intentionally or unknowingly, will buy and illegally export ivory souvenirs from these shops.

As a capital city, an international icon, and the host of the next summer Olympic and Paralympic Games, we urge you to strengthen Tokyo's commitment to biodiversity conservation by closing its market for ivory as soon as possible.

We encourage you to use your voice, as an internationally recognized political leader, and lead Tokyo forward, joining Oregon, the United States, and many others in fulfilling our roles in protecting the world's elephants.

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Thank you for considering this matter. If you have any queries or would like additional information, please do not hesitate to contact our offices.

Sincerely,



Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senate



Peter DeFazio
Member of Congress



Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress

CC:

Koji Tomita, Ambassador, Embassy of Japan to the United States
Joseph M. Young, Chargé d'Affaires ad interim, U.S. Embassy Tokyo